



LET  
SPAIN  
BUY ARMS

TO  
DEFEND  
DEMOCRACY

# STUDENTS IN ACTION

The Story of a Life against Fascism

PRICE : FOURPENCE

Published by the University Labour Federation

VLAS. And I, too, believed in something for years, and lived in peace because of it. And then when I understood that there is emptiness in my heavens—that there is no life after death—anguish seized me, and I became afraid of death. I was afraid to become a mushroom, a worm in the earth.

MATVEI. It's a difficult situation, worms are easily crushed.

VLAS. And you'll be crushed too.

MATVEI. No—because I'll live on even after my death! And not up there, beyond your stars, but here on earth, in the minds and memories of living people, in what I've done down here on earth. . . .

VLAS. You'll have to die anyway . . . wherever there is war there is death. . . .

MATVEI. Even, if necessary, we'll have to pass through death. . . .

VLAS. And why should it be necessary?

MATVEI. Why?—because we're building our happiness here on earth, and while we're building it we've got to *defend* our earth and our happiness.

VLAS. And if you're killed in the process?

MATVEI. Then there'll be Lavrenti here still,—and Glasha,—and Petka.

VLAS. But what does that mean to you? You'll not be here to see it!

MATVEI. What if I'm not? I won't be here to-morrow at the station! But the farm for breeding sables will be here! And Glasha will be starting her search for gold. . . .

And the more I bring off and accomplish in life, for the happiness of those close to me, the longer I shall live after death!

VLAS. And you've got lots of people "close to" you?

MATVEI. Enough! *More* than plenty! The workers of the entire world!

From "Distant Point" by Afinogenov  
(quoted by the courtesy of the Pushkin Press).

# RAM NAHUM—

## FRONT LINE STUDENT

EARLY in the morning of July 28th, 1942, a single Nazi raider, on his way back to Germany, dropped a couple of casual bombs on Cambridge and passed on.

Probably when he got back to base he had little to say for himself. Perhaps he had failed to local some important industrial target in the Midlands, to blow up an ammunition dump or destroy a railway yard. Probably the Fascists were displeased with him at base.

He did not know that by accident he had found his way to one of the front lines against Fascism.

One of those two casual bombs killed Ram Nahum, a research scientist, 24 years old.

In the weeks that followed, in offices and barracks, in ships and colleges, in students' digs and factories, those men and women who had known this man wrote to each other pledging themselves to work harder, study harder and fight harder in the struggle against Fascism. They gave this pledge because they knew the meaning of his death and the size of the job it must be to fill the gap.

This story is not written here for those of you who knew him. It is written for those who never knew or worked with him, especially for those of you who are, starting your student life this year. It is written so that you may know the meaning and the lesson not only of his death, but of his life.

It is not an academic subject, as you will see. It is as real and urgent as the bomb that killed him.

### Who was this Ram Nahum?

Who was he? It would be easier to tell you what he did, to give a catalogue of his achievements, of the campaigns he led and the activities of every kind he organised. But what's a catalogue? We want to try to give you the substance and the spirit of the man.

That would be easier, again, if Ram had been a great romantic figure, a "fanatic" or an eccentric of some kind, so that we could paint a picture of him with a few sharp strokes. But the fact is, he was very much a normal young student—and very much more as well. He lived a normal kind of student's life—only he filled it full.

Take a look at his picture on the cover. It's a very good one of him.

Look at the tousled hair, the clothes, the happy rather sheepish grin. It's a picture of a student. It was taken in Cambridge, but it needn't have been. It might have been taken in Prague or Belgrade or New York or Birmingham or Sofia or Moscow. A student, typical of students the world over.

It was taken in 1938 when the National Government's policy of Non-Intervention was starving the Spanish people of the means to defend themselves against Franco's steady stream of Axis tanks and guns and aircraft. He's carrying the sort of poster that students in all the free countries of the world were carrying. Not that it was every student who felt like that about Spain, or even recognised the meaning of the Spanish war. Still fewer were those who were prepared to be sandwich men on poster parades in aid of Spain. There were many who thought such activities undignified. But Ram didn't care about that. He didn't give a damn about that kind of dignity. He'd made up his mind that the struggle of the Spanish people was in the long run as much a struggle for our own democracy as for theirs, that Fascism was as much our own enemy as theirs.

Having made up his mind, he worked.

He not only carried posters, he inspired and organised tirelessly a great campaign of which this poster parade was only one small part.

### **Was he a great speaker ?**

At a meeting held in a small café in Cambridge, 1937, a very eloquent gentleman was talking. It was a beautiful speech, every word well chosen, every sentence smooth and polished, every argument balanced and pointed. His elocution was good and he used his hands elegantly and with effect. When he sat down there seemed very little left to say.

Then at the back of the room a young Jew got up; thick-set, with dark untidy curly hair, nothing elegant about him at all, nothing romantic, nothing very striking. He spoke clumsily, jerkily, searching for words. He rubbed the side of his nose with his fingers. He made rather vague cutting movements with his hands. But almost as soon as he began to speak those who heard him began to think, found themselves forced to think. Within five minutes he had demolished the arguments of the eloquent gentleman by the force and the truth of what he had to say.

No.. He wasn't a great speaker—if we judge speakers by the way they put things over rather than by the truth and sincerity of what they say.

He hadn't the gift of the gab. He was no demagogue. He struck no poses. He made no glorious perorations. He found all the difficulties that most of us find when we have to get up on our feet and express ourselves.

He didn't enjoy making public speeches. But he had something to say, so he made them. He knew they were a necessary part of his job, so he worked hard to improve them, make them more effective. It was tough going, but he succeeded to a large degree.

Of course in smaller meetings, in discussion groups or on committees, it was another matter altogether. There, the grand gesture and the sentimental sentence cut no ice. There, what is



wanted is quick, clear thinking, sound judgment, and talking straight to the point, with no trimmings. And there Ram was supreme. However complicated the subject and confused the discussion, he was able to clear it all up and present both the problem and its solution in a simple straightforward manner.

This isn't meant to make him out a superman. He was no such thing. But he had a good brain, good judgment, common-sense, and he knew how to use them. He didn't talk unless he knew what he was talking about.

He made sure that he *did* know what he was talking about.

### **He must have been an exceptionally serious young man.**

Serious? Look at his face on the cover. It's a far happier more cheerful face than any you'll see in a Night Club. His was the cheerfulness that comes not from *ersatz* entertainment but from a full exciting worthwhile life. His was happiness that came through his work itself and not from outside it, not from escape from it.

Exceptionally serious?

You might have seen him swimming in the Cam at midnight, splashing and ducking his friends and laughing like a kid; walking to Grantchester on a rare free summer's afternoon; playing automatic football with great concentration in a little Paris café; pursuing the best French food in the dirtiest French restaurants; hurling himself around a squash court with tremendous energy, much sweat and toil, and considerable success; going to Sadler's Wells opera and singing the songs in the London streets as he walked back.

He was a great eater, Ram. His opinions on food were as big as his appetite. It's said that he once wrote a "Gourmand's Guide to France." At any rate he was capable of it. His favourite restaurant in Soho was very dirty and very cheap. The surroundings didn't matter so long as the food was good.

In his Cambridge digs one tiny room acted as both bathroom and kitchen. There were bottles and saucepans all over the bathroom floor—or, if you like, there were bath towels and soap all over the kitchen. There was no room for more than two people there at once, and even two was a tight squeeze. It was there that he cooked vast and delicious meals from very ordinary ingredients. One evening he came back tired after a hard day's work. He laid his head on the table. "I'm off my food," he said. Later on he disappeared into the bathroom and cooked and ate an enormous meal.

He was absolutely hopeless with cherries or plums or strawberries or anything like that. He'd go down to the Market Square to buy them for supper and eat nearly all of them in the street on his way back.

Ram loved life. He loved and was loved. He laughed a great deal, both at his friends and at himself.

He was an anti-Fascist.

Yuo must understand that and know exactly what it means.

He didn't merely hold anti-Fascist views. He didn't just say to himself: "Fascism is a hateful dangerous thing." He didn't merely talk and write. He *was* an anti-Fascist.

He lived no "Box and Cox" existence with his political views. He was no "Jekyll and Hyde," becoming an anti-Fascist on dark nights at political meetings. Politics were never a game or a recreation to him. His views were part of him. They were more than views. They were values. So that it is impossible to dissociate him from them.

*Having made up his mind, he worked.*

### **He lived against Fascism.**

Ram loved life. Therefore he was anti-Fascist. He saw correctly that Fascism is the negation of life, that it bases itself on the utter destruction of the liberties, the decencies and the peace that make life worth living.

When Ram came up to Cambridge in 1936, Mussolini had been in power for more than a decade, Hitler for three years, and Franco, in the cause of Fascism, had just plunged his country into a bloody civil war. Already it was clear what Fascism meant; clear, at least, to those who were honest with themselves, who wanted to see. Already its meaning could be heard in the cries that came from the Concentration Camps and Ghettoes of Fascist Europe, black spots which were spreading swiftly like a plague across the Continent.

Fascism, as Ram understood, doesn't strike only at a man's free time, at his leisure, his holidays or his more expensive pleasures. It strikes at every hour of his day and night, at his whole way of life, at life itself. Therefore, Ram decided, it is impossible to fight back at it with only a part of a free man's life. It is inadequate to fight it only in spare time, or after supper when there's nothing easier to do, or when the only film that's showing is one you've seen before. Fascism strikes at life. Therefore, thought Ram, you must *live* against Fascism.

### **But isn't that an abnormal way of looking at things for an 18-year-old-student?**

Fifteen years ago it would have been considered abnormal. Then, if a student had carried a poster, it would probably have advertised for strike-breakers.

But by 1936 there were many students who saw things the way Ram did, who recognised the menace of Fascism, who worked as hard as he did. There were students who went out to Spain to fight in the International Brigade in defence of democracy. Some of our finest students, such as John Cornford and David Guest, gave their lives before Madrid.

Still, taking a number average, it was unusual. But it was logical. It was intelligent.

To-day, only a few years later, we know just how logical it was. To-day we are all in the struggle, like it or not. In 1938 it was left to Ram and his fellow students to organise a poster parade in Cambridge. To-day there's a Ministry of Information and thousands of anti-Nazi posters officially posted by salaried officials.

To-day it's a life and death struggle, obvious to all. The cries of agony have moved in from distant Dachau to the blitzed house next door, the bombers that destroyed Guernica have mangled Coventry, and the tanks and guns which took Madrid have drenched the battlefield with British blood.

It wasn't abnormal, it was intelligent, surely, to work for the destruction of this monstrous war-machine *before* it could eat its way to its present menacing proportions.

There is irony in the fact that to-day so many young men are dying for something for which they never lived.

### HE WAS A SOCIALIST.

Ram loved life, therefore he hated Fascism. Because he loved life he could not be content with a rear-guard action.

**It wasn't enough to be anti-Fascist or anti- anything else.**

Fascism is neither accidental nor ephemeral. Its roots are in modern capitalist society. It represents the reaction of the privileged class, of the monopoly capitalists, against the threat to their property and power which the growth of a powerful Labour movement in a virile vigorous democracy involves; a reaction against the loud demand of the people for better conditions of life, and consequently, also, a reaction against the principles of democracy under which the people's demand could be effected.

It would be a half-measure, then, to destroy Fascism without removing these powerful roots. It is not enough to ward off its continuing threat. The task is to build a better society in which Fascism can never rear its head, in which mankind can enjoy security and liberty and peace. This must be a Socialist society.

Ram was a Socialist, a member of the Communist Party, a "Red".

Here again, you must understand this clearly. He *was* a Socialist. There is no such thing as a part-time or part-life Socialist. There cannot be. Socialism is not simply a form of society to which we must advance. It is a philosophy which gives the key to an understanding of our present troubles. It is not a matter merely of views on what will or should happen in the future, but of *values* which concern a man's work and his way of life to-day and all the time.



Ram Nahum was a scientist. The scientific approach to every subject was the only one he could accept. He became a Socialist because he was a scientist, because only Socialism gives a scientific analysis of the history and movement of society.

It was Marxism, or scientific Socialism, which gave him his clear understanding of the issues of his time. He was able to fight consistently for the best causes of that time because he was a Marxist. That would have been Ram's explanation if you had asked him. He was, in point of fact, one of the finest Marxists of his generation.

He was immensely interested in the Soviet Union and proud of its achievements. He used to sing the "Red Airmen's Song" when he was particularly happy.

He was proud, too, of the *Daily Worker*. He felt it was *his* paper. He frequently sold it in the streets of Cambridge and missed it badly during the years of its ban. He would have celebrated on 7th September.

Here, then, were the two directing forces in Ram's life. He was against Fascism. He was for Socialism. The two went hand in hand, as they must. He knew the menace of Fascism and fought against it. Socialism taught him how and why he must fight, and what he must fight for.

*Having made up his mind, he worked.*

**Wasn't he well off ? Rich and "Red"—that seems a contradiction.**

There was no contradiction.

He came from a wealthy Manchester family and he was well off. But there was no contradiction in his case.

The test of a man is not so much what he does with his money as what he does with his time. The worst effect of much money on a student is what it may do to his values and to the way he lives.

It is often possible, of course, for young men with money to avoid unpleasant realities for a long time (though they cannot avoid them on the battlefields of Africa). Even to an intelligent man like Ram, money could have been a temptation to escapism. But more often money prevents a man from seeing rather than stops him acting when he does see.

The fact that Ram had money didn't in any way distort or blur his understanding of social realities. It never prevented him seeing. Nor, having seen the class conflict in Capitalist society, did he ever feel tempted to identify himself with the privileged class. If there was money and family background to link him with that class, all his interests and values, both as a student and as a man, all the real things in his life, all that he understood so clearly, pointed to the working class as the class with which he could march forward against Fascism, and for the progress, the science, the education and the culture that he desired.



He saw nothing strange or inconsistent in this, he wasn't in any way self-conscious about it—or about any other money matter. He'd roar with laughter when teased about a trip he and some friends had made across Europe in an old car one summer vac., borrowing money from a web of relations all the way across.

As a matter of fact he spent very little of his money on himself. The things that made him happy were not expensive. It doesn't cost anything to swim in the Cam at midnight; only 5 centimes or so to play automatic football in a little Paris café; it was a cheap holiday to "hitch" to Cornwall and hike across the moors.

Probably the only luxury he indulged was gramophone records. He had most of Mozart's work, quite a lot of Beethoven and Bach and Haydn, some madrigals and some revolutionary songs.

As far as money goes he lived the life of an average student—*only he filled it full*. Rich or poor, he would have been the same.

But because he had financial security himself he was able to appreciate very clearly what part the lack of it must play in a man's life. He was the more determined to work for a society in which all should have it. Without it, he knew, there is fear where there should be happiness and hope, frustration where there should be accomplishment and a full life.

*He made up his mind—and he worked.*

### **By the way, what about his studies ?**

There was nothing "by the way" about them.

Ram was a student. The first job of a student is to study. A student has no right to call himself a Socialist, Ram believed, unless he is first a good student. It is a poor kind of Socialist who throws away precious opportunities of education which young men in hundreds of thousands of working-class homes would give their right hands to obtain. A lazy student can no more call himself a Socialist than a lazy munitions worker or a lazy soldier.

There are many war-time students who feel uncomfortable, who want to throw it up and join the Forces. They are wrong, and Ram used to tell them so. Even in beleaguered Moscow last year the Universities carried on, and in China a large proportion of students have not been allowed to fight.

We are fighting for the opportunity to build a new and better world. The building of it will require from us all the abilities and qualifications which university education can provide. We shall need knowledge, the richest possible variety of knowledge, to heal the wounds of the war and then to give richness to the new life which we must see to it will follow.

As Socialists we believe, as Ram believed, that a Socialist society will for the first time present us with the chance to harness the immense resources of the world for the service of the people and to develop and exploit them to the full. We have to make sure that when that chance comes we have the necessary qualities to take it and do it justice. *Otherwise it will be a hollow victory.*

Clearly then the war-time student has an even heavier responsibility than in peace time to study hard. His job it is to see that no bloody battle won in the Egyptian desert or on the shores of France turns out to be that hollow victory.

Ram set a good example in this respect. In spite of all his other work he secured a First Class Honours Degree in Physics. And that means not just brains but very hard work. He made himself one of the ablest physicists of his generation.

Perhaps you are beginning to understand what is meant by the words, once again: He lived a normal student's life—only he filled it *full*.

## STUDENTS AND POLITICS

**But why should a student worry so much about politics ?**

RAM would have liked to answer that one.

The Spanish students who fought and died in trenches round their university in Madrid could answer it. So could the students of Prague, executed in hundreds by the Nazis because they raised the voice of liberty.

There used to be a cynical old adage, a dowager adage of the London clubs, which said: "If you're not a Socialist when you're twenty, you've no heart; and if you are one when you're thirty, you've no head." The ruling class smirked indulgently at the antics of undergraduate Reds. The old men mocked the hot generation of ideas in stuffy student digs and the busy distribution of home-baked pamphlets.

"My boy, you don't know what you're talking about. You haven't lived. Wait till you've poked your head outside your little university world into the great big beautiful bad Capitalist world beyond. Wait till you've seen the coal piled high in working-class baths. In fact, wait till you've met social reality, my boy."

"My dear, I hear your young Percy has a beard and a red tie and goes around with awful Communists." "Oh! yes, my dear, he's going through all the usual stages."

Ten or fifteen years ago there was often justice in these sneers. Even more lately you could find the type of student who grew his political opinion with his beard and shaved it off to enter his father's business. There may still be students who take it up as a game, such fun to be different and daring and probably dirty, such fun to cause a stir among the stuffed fish in the hall at home.

But nobody could sneer at Ram, nor at the thousands of students of his day who worked with him.

Nobody could laugh at the British students who gave their lives in Spain.

**Students have a right to be politically conscious and politically active.**

In the last ten years students generally, because they have been confronted sharply with the social realities of the time, with unemployment, frustration and the menace of war, have changed from the frivolous exhibitionists of the 1920's to honest hard-working men and women, conscious of a responsibility to play a full part in the struggles of the time.

Still, there lingered among some students some self-consciousness about political activity. Ram used to point out how unjustified this was. Students have not only a right but a duty to be both politically conscious and politically active.

They have that right because they can be and often are as much the victims of Capitalist society as anyone else. Students



can starve. Students can end on the dole, like any miner, because Capitalist society finds no use for their qualifications.

While up at the University they may not be faced with immediate economic problems; though many of them, kept there by the self-sacrifice of working-class families, certainly are. But they all know that the moment they leave University to use the knowledge they've acquired they'll meet the life-and-death bread-and-butter struggle for employment and security. That is a shadow which looms over their University life. They have a right to worry about it in advance. They have a right to think and talk—*and act*.

### **Fascism fears knowledge.**

Students have a right to be anti-Fascist.

Not only does Fascism threaten them, as it threatens all of us, with war and the destruction of liberty, but in particular it reserves its foulest venom for education and culture. "Whenever I see the word 'Culture' I reach for my gun" were the words of a leading Nazi, words which have branded his party and its régime for ever.

These were not mere words, as the world knows. Through the length and breadth of the lands they have conquered the Nazis have hunted, tortured and killed the men of culture, artists and scientists, writers and philosophers. Suitably they celebrated their first seizure of power by the public burning, in the name of Race, of Germany's finest literature. Wherever their armies go in Russia, special extermination squads follow in the trail—for the special extermination of culture; burning and looting the home of Tolstoy, destroying Russian museums and libraries whenever they reach them.

It isn't hard to figure out why they treat culture as an enemy. It *is* their enemy. It's the enemy of absurd racial theories, of darkness and superstition. It's the enemy of war. It's the friend of progress. It goes hand in hand with liberty.

Education, too, is the enemy of Fascism, and for much the same reasons. The lies and superstitions on which the Fascists feed their peoples can only survive where there is ignorance. Nazi "education" mocks the word. Its finest finished product is the S.S. man of the concentration camps, capable of deliberate bestialities which would have shocked the Middle Ages.

With the museums and libraries of conquered Europe, therefore, the schools and universities have also gone. There must be ignorance everywhere. They dare not risk a glimmer of the truth.

### **Fascism fears students.**

The students of Europe have a fine record in the fight against Fascism. In every part of conquered Europe they are preserving the spirit of liberty. In every fight they have been in the front line. They have paid, with open eyes, a heavy price. Many

have died. There have been wholesale mass executions in the Universities.

In the Balkans, in Bulgaria, and Jugoslavia, during long years of semi-Fascist dictatorship, the students kept their Universities as oases of freedom.

In China it was the students who first realised fully the need for united popular resistance to Japanese aggression. Throughout the war against Japan they have played a heroic part, fighting, educating the people in the ways of democracy, moving their Universities from the occupied coastal areas to caves in the hills, where research continues and learning is used for the common good of the whole people.

In India the students have done magnificent work in educating the illiterate and have blazed a trail of anti-Fascist action which arrests and imprisonment have never daunted. The All-India Student Federation was the first great national Indian organisation to call for full co-operation with the United Nations in the war.

In Spain the students, almost to a man, stood loyal to their democratic government and fought against Fascism not only with rifles but by teaching and educating the people in face of every imaginable hardship.

In Czechoslovakia the people of Prague knew where the students stood; for when they were marched in hundreds to the railway station on their way to imprisonment, the people wept in the streets as they saw them pass, and mourned "*our students*."

The Nazis were always afraid of knowledge. To-day they are *afraid of students*.

They have reason to be.

British students, then, have no mere right to be anti-Fascist. It is their duty, their special responsibility.

### **Students and Socialism.**

They have a right, too, to be Socialists, and to march forward with the working-class towards a Socialist society.

They have this right because the social demands of the workers are nearly always the economic demands of middle-class students. The workers want more houses—student architects want the jobs. The workers want more and better education—student teachers want the opportunity to provide it.

The restrictions of Capitalist economy involve the suppression and limitation of inventions, a thousand obstructions in the path of science. Looking East to the Soviet Union the students see that in a Socialist country science and art and study have the place they deserve, that Universities there can make a full unfettered contribution to the life of the people, that every potentiality of science, every scrap of knowledge, is used for the rapid acceleration of economic and social progress.

They have a right, then, to be Socialists.

## RAM NAHUM AT CAMBRIDGE

If such a man as we've attempted to describe, holding just those views and values, had been a student during the last few years, what would he have done?

This is what Ram did.

### School.

Ram came up to Cambridge in October, 1936, a boy of eighteen.

He had led a fairly normal life at school at Clifton.

He had not been expelled. He had not refused to join the O.T.C. He had written no long adolescent poems in dark corners when he should have been playing games.

On the contrary, he rose to be Head of his House. He played a great deal of squash and rackets. He played water polo for the school. He worked hard and won an Open Exhibition in science to Cambridge.

But already he was interested in politics and economics and had begun to hold Socialist views.

He shocked his Headmaster more than somewhat when in his last term he chose Karl Marx's "Capital" as a prize.

### Cambridge.

Those days of autumn, 1936, seem far off, unimportant, now. But they were fateful days. People were learning for the first time what Fascism meant, and the dreadful issue of peace or war was being decided.

When Ram came up his general attitude was already largely determined. He had already associated himself in his own mind with all those who were fighting to improve society. But he was no romantic idealist, no Utopian. He had no sentimental illusions. It is characteristic of him that even at that age he was essentially realist and scientific in his approach. It was impossible for Ram to dream alone. The world was going all wrong. Right, let's get down to things, get moving and *do something*.

### C.U.S.C.

His second day in Cambridge a student called on him and invited him to the Socialist Club meeting that night. He went.

It was a Business Meeting of the Cambridge University Socialist Club, or C.U.S.C., and it impressed him. He liked the scope of the political analysis, the spirit of enthusiasm and comradeship, and, above all, the immediate plans for action. He joined it and became an active member of the Pembroke College Group.

Within a few weeks, then, of coming up Ram was spending his energy in the long, difficult, day-to-day struggle against Fascism. Many of the jobs were small and seemed to be thankless—it wasn't much fun to be agent for University *Forward* at that time.



But no job was too small for him if it had a useful practical object, and he knew that the experience of work and organisation was very valuable.

### **Peace Council.**

Gradually he took on more responsible work. He became the Socialist Club's representative on the University Peace Council, an organisation within which a great many of the student political and religious societies came together, bound by a great common interest in the preservation of peace, to work for that system of collective security which they believed might still preserve it.

Ram always saw the value of this kind of work. He was no sectarian. He never believed that Socialists have an exclusive privilege to work for peace and progress, nor that Socialists could save the situation on their own. In the days of the issue of a United Front against the Chamberlain appeasers he poured scorn on those who refused, in the name of "pure" Socialism, to co-operate in the immediate practical task which faced them.

He saw very clearly the value and potentialities of political activity which would draw the maximum number of students of all shades of belief into the practical struggle against Fascism.

Consequently his work on the Peace Council was a great success. He took the chief part in mobilising all kinds of students in a big campaign for the boycotting of Japanese goods. He infused into it initiative and enterprise and new ideas. Students stood outside shops which sold Japanese produce and distributed leaflets telling the shoppers why they should not buy. Motor cars and bicycles were enlisted for great publicity parades. A "China Shop" sold Chinese goods and contributed to a big collection for the Chinese students.

And always Ram was there himself in the centre of it. If he organised a poster parade he carried a poster. He never led from behind.

### **His work for India.**

No "Jekyll and Hyde" democrat himself, Ram hated the idea of a British democracy which, once out of sight beyond the Indian Ocean and behind a smoke-screen of censorship, could turn to oppression, dictatorship and exploitation.

Consequently, throughout his years as a student, he paid special attention to the problem of India, working in close co-operation with Indian students in this country. "We call it the Indian problem," he said, "but it is our problem too." Democracy, he believed, is incompatible with imperialism. British imperialism in India, based on the domination of British finance capital, provides life-blood for the forces of reaction in Britain itself. It is a source of weakness and danger to the forces of progress and democracy.

This last fact, which Ram used to stress in the years before the

war, has become increasingly clear to many people now that democracy is being directly assailed from every corner of the world. For to-day, especially in the Far East, Empire has clearly proved itself to be inconsistent with that total war effort of the whole people which in any given battle area alone can bring success. Only a free and independent India can play a full part alongside the United Nations in the struggle against Fascism.

Right from the start, then, in the campaigns he led for Indian independence, he stressed that this was the cause not only of the Indian people but of human progress. He saw their struggle against a world background, recognised its immense importance in the world-wide struggle for liberty.

At the same time he had a deep and special sympathy for the Indian people. His heart was in it when he made speeches, wrote articles and organised campaigns to mobilise British students behind the call of their Indian comrades for freedom. For many years his greatest friend was an Indian student. In the last year of his life it was with an Indian scientist that he worked on difficult and important research for the Government. In his rooms in Cambridge you would often have met an Indian. In fact you'd have met young men and women of every race and colour. They were his friends, bound to him by common values and a common determination to work for a new world in which colour and race mean neither privilege nor poverty.

### **Paris: The World Student Association.**

Ram spent most of his vacations, as many other British students did, in France, working in Paris in the office of the World Student Association against Fascism.

It was work he loved. For here he met the anti-Fascist students from every corner of the world, learnt of the fine work they were doing in China, Spain and Yugoslavia, worked with students from the underground movements of Germany and Italy.

Here his experiences strengthened his hatred of Fascism and his determination to work for a Socialist world.

Here he learnt, too, how much students can really do in the struggle, how the Universities, because they are concerned with the high values of science and culture, are the natural enemies of Fascism and can—and must—become real fortresses of freedom.

He brought this understanding back, and was never tired of telling British students that they had an important place in the international student movement.

Ram felt a great comradeship with these front-line students from other lands. He is loved and remembered to-day by a host of students in the countries which Fascism has conquered since those days.

He had a deep hatred and contempt for the racial theories with which Fascism attempts to divide us against each other. As a scientist he appreciated their absurdity. As a Socialist he recognised that with ignorance to back them they can quickly

become an effective tool in the hands of reaction and a great potential danger to democracy.

The Nazi propaganda which attempts a ridiculous distinction between "Aryan" capital, which it calls "creative capital," and Jewish capital, which it calls "destructive," is deliberately intended to turn German eyes from the evil results of capitalism itself in Germany. It is a technique which, as Ram well knew, can be used in other circumstances for similar purposes: whether by calling loud attention to Jewish names on Black Market crime-sheets in order to distract it from the crime of profiteering itself, or by the invention of a racial inferiority based on colour in order to justify colonial exploitation and imperialism.

Ram had an equal contempt, then, for all such racial theories, whether they come from Goebbels or Vansittart. Vansittart, he said, is Goebbels looking the other way. Vansittartism, he recognised, in addition to its effect on the war itself offers great dangers for the post-war world. It is a racial theory like other racial theories, unscientific, unhistorical, false. There is no such thing as a "Herrenvolk." There must, in the post-war world, be no such thing as a "Sklavenvolk." The enemy, Ram used to emphasize again and again, is no one race but Fascism, wherever it is to be found, in Germany, in Italy, in Vichy France or in the servile Quisling "governments" of Europe.

He knew that liberty and culture, and the other things of importance to mankind, recognise no national or racial barriers, but that each people has its own special contribution to make, one that can only be made in conditions of freedom and equality. That is why he was never happier than in his work with foreign students in Paris and in the long evenings of café conversations that followed the work.

And that, perhaps, is why he came to be one of the two or three acknowledged leaders of the World Student Association.

### **President of C.U.S.C.**

As the terms went by, the leadership of students in Cambridge and throughout the country began to devolve on him. He swept them forward, helped them, taught them, lead them. He became President of the Socialist Club at Cambridge and led it surely through times of difficulty, excitement and enormous possibilities, to great achievement.

At each phase of the struggle he seemed to see more clearly than anyone else the new possibilities which opened out. Not only more clearly, but more quickly. Looking back, his friends remember how many times Ram was thinking way ahead of them. What they were thinking in September, Ram had been considering in July.

Ram, as has been said, was no romantic figure. He was never a great popular leader. Rather he was a leader of the leaders, inspiring them with his clear objective vision, helping them with cool wisdom and insight.



At the same time he would sell pamphlets on street corners, canvass students from room to room, collect money for refugees, plan study courses. If we talk in terms of modesty, Ram was a very modest man. But he simply saw it in terms of a job to be done.

### **The new character of Cambridge.**

Cambridge in those last two years before the war became a centre of progressive thought and practical action. The old University, with its fine traditions from the days of the Civil War, attained a new vitality and vigour. The Socialist Club of a thousand members had a deep influence on the University. The campaign for aid to the Spanish Republic, in particular, brought into political activity hundreds of students who, a year before, would have turned up their noses at a poster parade or a door-to-door collection.

A few years before, the student "intellectuals" had formed small cliques, often precious and snobbish. By 1939 the intellectual life of Cambridge was soundly grounded in political and social understanding. C.U.S.C. had replaced surrealism. Talking was no longer an end in itself. It was made to lead to action.

In the forming of this new character of Cambridge, Ram Nahum played a part which will not be forgotten.

### **Ram as a scientist.**

Any account of Ram's life would be incomplete if it left out his work as a scientist; it was a part of his life that most people did not know enough about.

His friends, of course, knew that Ram had decided, while still at school, to make science his career; that at Cambridge he had specialised in Physics; that after taking his degree, he had been awarded a Goldsmiths' Studentship for research in nuclear physics; and that he worked an amazing number of hours every day in the Cavendish Laboratory. And naturally, they assumed that he was a good scientist, it was natural to assume that Ram was good at physics, as at everything else.

But scientists as a body tend to form a closed circle, bounded by laboratory walls and learned periodicals, from which news leaks slowly to the outside world. Many of his friends never realised what a good scientist Ram was, and how much he achieved in his short career. It is unnecessary here to say more about his work than that it was concerned with the structure of the atom—to put it in popular language, "atom splitting" with the cyclotrone—but it should be stated how successfully he carried it out. His four papers on the subject (an amazing number for so short a time) are published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*.

But Ram's work as a scientist was not confined to his laboratory. He felt most strongly that science has a social function to fulfil, that science divorced from the life of the community becomes

sterile and little more than an intriguing intellectual pastime. Scientists must realise their social responsibilities, must see that science is not separated from the life of the people. Ram also realised that this applies to student scientists just as much as to research workers or scientists in industry, and that this is a question of importance to the whole student movement.

It was to this end that he built up, almost from the beginning, the Science Faculty of the National Union of Students, of which he was chairman. This Faculty will undoubtedly play an increasingly important part in the work of the N.U.S. It is one of the many concrete results of Ram's work, one of the fields in which his work must and will be carried on.

### **Chairman of the University Labour Federation.**

It was in 1939 that Ram took his degree. But he stayed on at Cambridge to do research. His interest in politics and the student movement did not diminish. His rooms in Cambridge became a centre where some of the best student leaders of the time came together. He became Chairman of the University Labour Federation.

In this, he saw the organisation which could unite all progressive students and mobilise them in the anti-Fascist struggle. The U.L.F. had sections in practically every University, and could be extended far beyond, to the training and technical colleges. It could appeal to all students both through the knowledge and understanding of Socialism which it spread, and the lead it gave on current political issues and on the many problems facing the Universities. It had a programme of increased learning and action. He saw that the U.L.F. could build a strong and vital student movement, ready to take its place alongside the democratic organisations of the people.

And so, with the same enthusiasm that characterised his work in C.U.S.C., he threw all his energies into the task of building the U.L.F. As his scientific work tied him to Cambridge, he couldn't visit the other Universities, and was thus not well known among contemporary students. But the actual help he gave to the U.L.F. in leadership and advice, in preparing study courses and writing for *University Forward*, in planning campaigns and organising the annual conferences, and in a thousand and one small but important jobs, is only being fully appreciated now that he is no longer there to give it.

In his work, Ram inspired and influenced thousands of young men and women, he gave something to the present generation of students which will never be lost.

to the opening of a front in Europe, that a decisive victory for the Allies can be gained only by crushing the German war-machine on the Continent of Europe, between the powerful blows of the Allied armies.

In Occupied Europe there are many students and ex-students who worked with Ram before the war. What must be their feelings of hope and encouragement when they see the results of the offensive in Africa! To-day they are waiting only for the signal, and the Continent of Europe will become a furnace of revolt. To-day Ram would have said : "Clear the Nazis out of Africa, then clear them off Europe and the face of the earth."

Let us say it with him. And not only say it, but work for it.



## THE CHOICE BEFORE YOU

"Man's dearest possession is Life. And since it is given him to live but once he must live so as to feel no torturing regrets for years without purpose; so live as not to be seared by the shame of a cowardly and trivial life; so live that dying he may say: All my life and all my strength were given to the finest cause in the world—the Liberation of Mankind."

—V. I. LENIN.

THE story of Ram Nahum is a story of a full and useful life, a life lived in the front line of the struggle against the deadly danger which menaces civilisation.

He was a great man. Great, because of the fullness of his life. Great, because with such enormous abilities in different directions he was able to live a balanced well-directed life, using them all to the full.

It is easier for us to-day than it was when Ram came up to Cambridge, to understand the issues and to recognise how we can play our part.

But there is a choice before us even now.

We can drift with the tide if we wish. We can leave it to others to win the victory, to others to prepare now to build the better world, which must be made to follow victory.

Or each of us can make the choice that Ram made and live our own full life in the front line against Fascism.

If we make that choice we have four clear practical responsibilities.

*First, we must study.*—We have the duty to become first-class students. We must understand our subjects, understand them more deeply and in a wider perspective. And we must appreciate the methods of study, are they adequate? Do they present the most efficient means of exposing all there is to gain from our course? Where they do not we must do our best to change and improve our curricula. We must strengthen our own faculty committees in our own college or university as Ram worked to build the N.U.S. Science Faculty Committee.

*The Fourth Term.*—In June most students go down from the University, and, apart from S.T.C. camps and the like, most do not return until the end of September or October. Some students work in factories or on the land. Others spend their time reading at home. Some do neither. But how much more effectively could these months be spent in the University, continuing our studies under supervision, using the libraries instead of the too frequently inadequate number of lectures, holding discussions among the students in our degree subjects and on topics which, though not included in our course, would nevertheless mean a greater understanding of our degree subjects. How much truer is the war-work we can do as full-time students than as temporary labour in a factory. The Fourth Term, said Ram, is the test of how clear students are of their own task. And the conviction with which they approach the problems involved is the measure

of how far we have thrown off any complacency which may still remain.

Four terms in one year, eight terms in two years, twelve terms in three. Can't we, asked so many students, complete the present degree, maintain the same standard, in eight terms in two years? We can if we work harder, draw more students into activity and discussions, and quicken our brains. Technicians are urgently required. Let us finish a year sooner. If we choose to say we will complete our degree in two years instead of three, or sooner than we do at present, then it means that we have advanced far because it means also that we understand the urgency of the moment and have declared that we will meet that urgency. And that we know how.

The problems involved in the Second Front are great. But they must and they will be faced. The problems involved in the introduction of the Fourth Term are great. And we as students will face up to them.

*Secondly, do war work.*—Most men are having some kind of military training, in the Home Guard, in the S.T.C., in the Air Squadrons. But in addition we have specialised training and expensive knowledge which should be put at the immediate disposal of the people. Students have worked in the Youth Clubs of their towns, leading discussions and helping in organisation. They have relieved teachers and lectured to troops, taken "Brains Trusts" to small units, sent entertainment parties to give shows to factory workers, troops and youth organisation.

But such activity cannot involve all or even most of us. No matter how brilliant we are, no matter how hard we work, there are few of us who can yet say we have no spare time. There are many small jobs—camouflage netting, helping in canteens, darning for troops, part-time work in factories—jobs which must be done and *for which we are not especially qualified*. For which no one is especially qualified except those who know they have the time. And in all honesty, most of us know that.

Perhaps partly because these jobs are in no way spectacular, this will make a genuine contribution to the war effort and will help to break down any barriers which may still exist between students and the rest of the people.

*Thirdly, it is our responsibility to live in a way which is progressive as well as active.*—It is vital to this that we should fully understand the great social and political issues of the day. From study-groups, discussions and conferences we can gain, like Ram, the knowledge we need. Through the student organisations we can translate our conclusions into practical action.

This is where the University Labour Federation, in particular, comes in. For many years, and especially for the last five years while Ram was leading it, the U.L.F. has given political leadership to those students most interested in contemporary affairs. To-day when its anti-Fascist enthusiasm and its confidence in Socialism are shared by the great majority of thinking people, it can reach further out to the students than ever before. To-day

it has the urgent task of mobilising students to play their part in backing up the offensive in Africa and the extension of that offensive to Europe. *It is our fourth clear responsibility to play a full part in that campaign.* Without that, whatever else we do, we will be petty.

### **A great memorial.**

There will be many memorials to Ram. There will be a Ram Nahum Memorial Library and an Anglo-Soviet X-ray Unit in his name.

But we intend a great memorial, a memorial not of words or promises or gifts, but of hard working and hard fighting. We have pledged ourselves to carry on tirelessly and fearlessly the struggle to which Ram gave his life.

Will you join us?

The choice must be made. We can only judge a man's life by the contribution he makes to the fight for the liberation of mankind. Ram Nahum made his contribution and it is one which will always be an inspiration to all students everywhere.

Ram Nahum is dead, but you are not. Ram Nahum's work remains: it is for you to carry it on. The choice is yours. A full life, positive and useful—or a cowardly and trivial life without value or achievement.

**YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE.**



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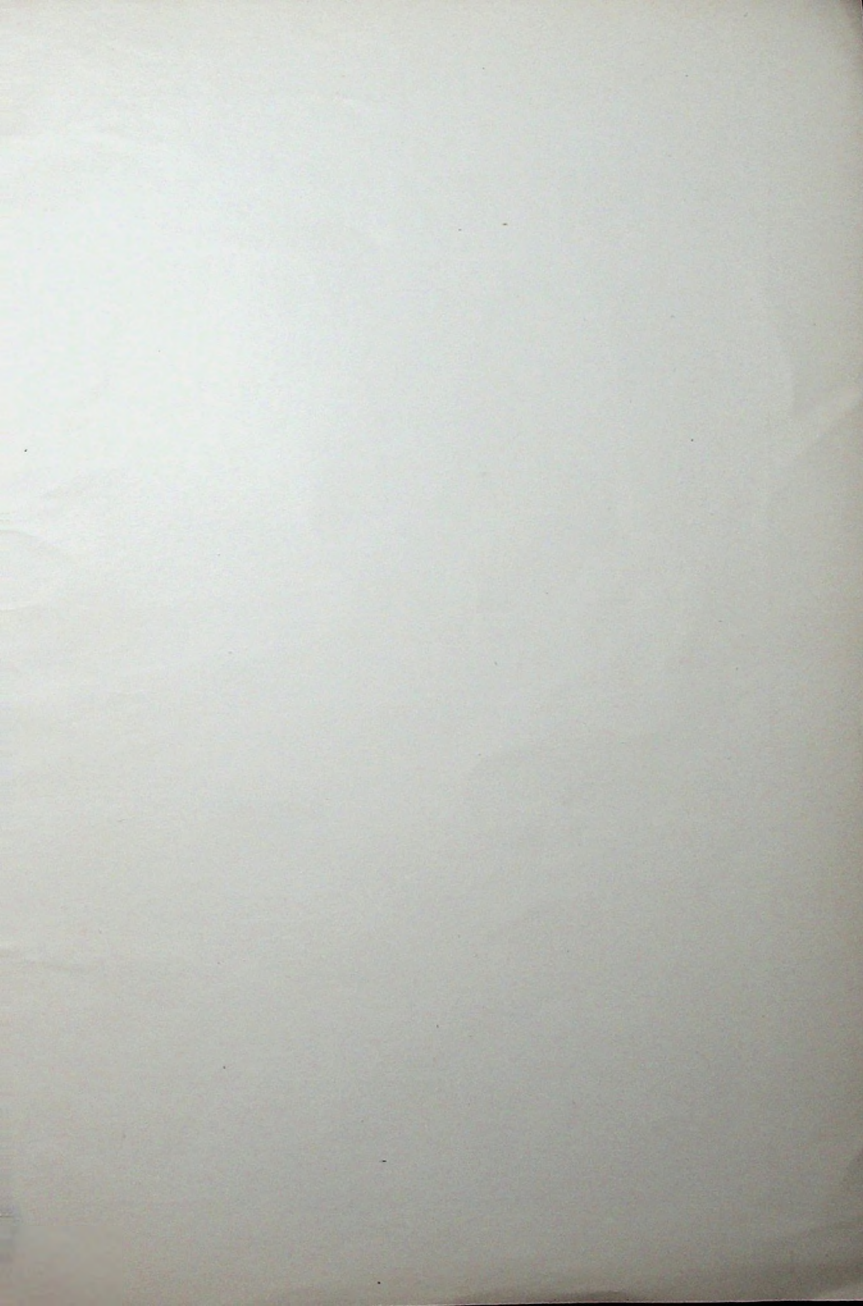
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